

CELEBRATING THE FIRST DECADE OF ASPEN COMICS!



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John **ERCEK**  
Tagline **GONZALEZ**  
Josh **REED**

EXECUTIVE  
ASSISTANT

# ASSASSINS

**BLOCKADE**  
ENTERTAINMENT

# **16**

COVER A







CELEBRATING THE FIRST DECADE OF ASPEN COMICS!

Vince *HERNANDEZ*  
John *ERCEK*  
Teodoro *GONZALEZ*  
Josh *REED*

**BLOCKADE**  
COMICS PRESENTS

# **16**

COVER B

EXECUTIVE  
ASSISTANT  
**A**

**ASSASSINS**



MIKE  
DEBALDO



*The story so far...*

They are raised from their youth with strict obedience and brutally trained to protect and serve their respective masters with discipline, loyalty and often times violence, if necessary. They are the Executive Assistants.

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT: ASSASSINS

# IBLOOD ORIGINI

PART 1 OF 3

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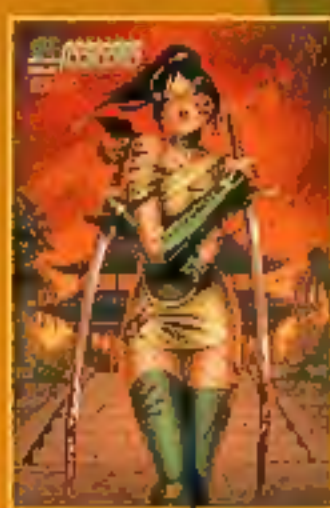
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QINGHAI, CHINA.

1965

I ARRIVED IN CHINA  
BY WAY OF MY FATHER'S  
EXILED PAST.

HE WAS A FEEBLE MAN,  
FOOLISH OF HEART. BUT, IT  
WAS HIS HEART THAT KEPT US  
ALIVE MY EARLY YEARS.

WE MADE OUR WAY FROM JAPAN  
THROUGH NORTH KOREA, EVENTUALLY  
ENDING UP IN A LARGE PROVINCE ON  
THE QINGHAI-TIBET PLATEAU.



YET, WE WERE IN NO  
STRENGTH TO CONTINUE.



AND ONCE THE  
SPIRIT IS BROKEN...



...INSTINCTS BEGIN  
TO EMERGE.



...MY SISTER,  
MAYU, SHE TAUGHT  
ME THIS VALUABLE  
LESSON...

...SURVIVAL IS  
NOT A CRIME...

TAKE THIS,  
HANA.



...I WILL ALWAYS BE IN  
DEBT TO HER FOR THIS.



13 YEARS LATER.

BUT, WHAT YOU MUST REMEMBER FROM MY SISTER AND I'S STRUGGLE-- IS THAT YOUR INSTINCT WILL ALWAYS KICK IN. DO NOT FIGHT IT. LET IT DICTATE YOUR CHOICES.\*

\*TRANSLATED FROM MANDARIN.

SHE WILL TRY TO USE HER SIZE TO GAIN THE ADVANTAGE ON YOU. THEIR FORCE IS OUR GAIN. EVADE AND PULL HER IN-- DO YOU HEAR ME?

DONE.

GOOD. NOW DO ME PROUD.

IS THAT A SMILE I SEE ON YOUR FACE?

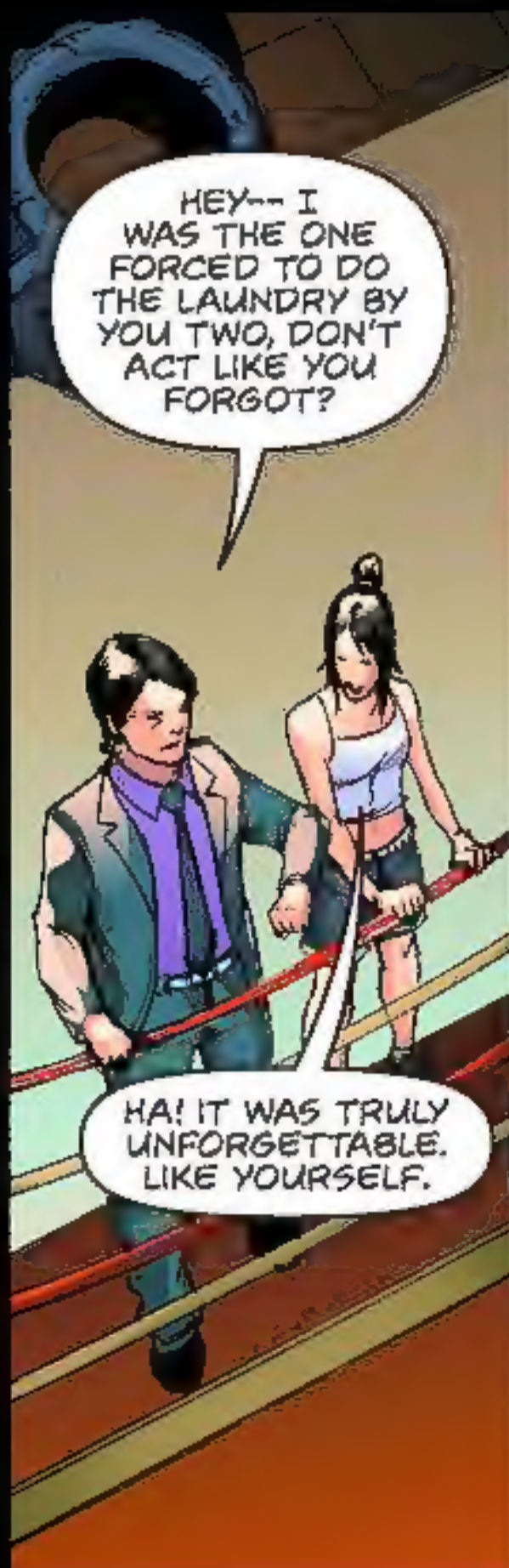
IT IS PRIDE. SHE DESERVES THIS VICTORY. SHE HAS WORKED HARD.

YOU BOTH HAVE. YOU WORK **TOO HARD**, HANA.

THE CHOICE IS NOT MINE. I DON'T HAVE A FANCY JOB TITLE LIKE YOURSELF...

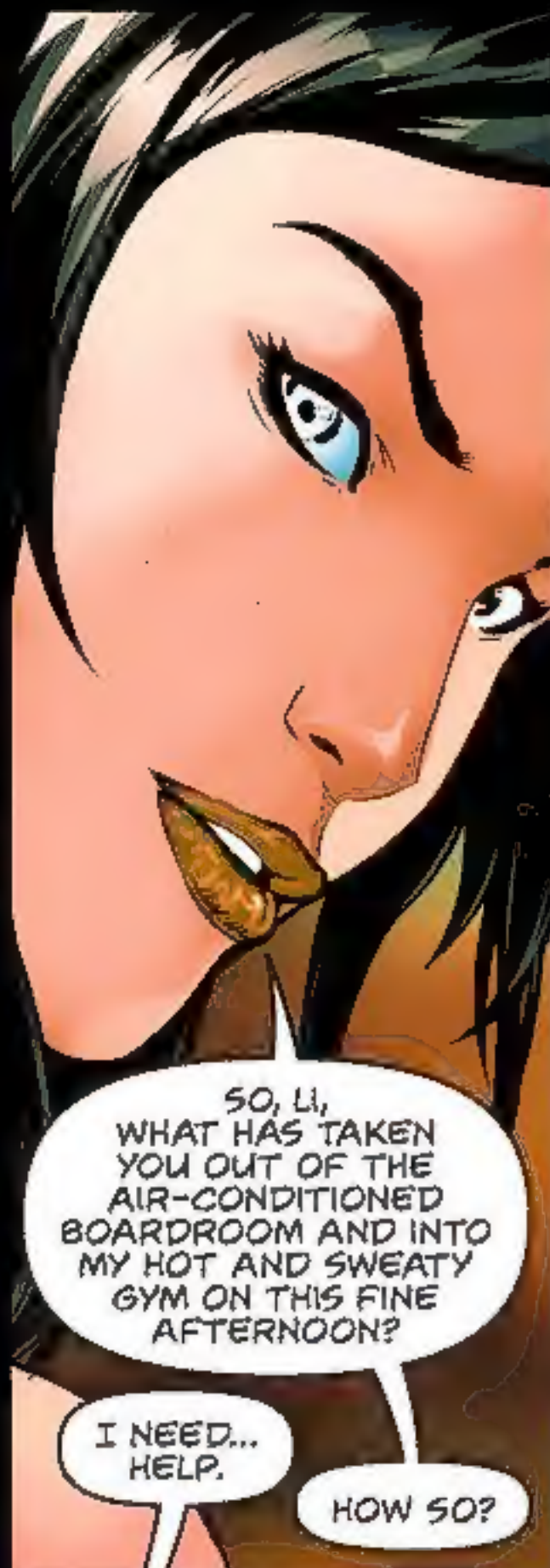
..SOME OF US HAVE TO GET OUR HANDS DIRTY IN ORDER TO PAY THE BILLS.





HEY-- I WAS THE ONE FORCED TO DO THE LAUNDRY BY YOU TWO, DON'T ACT LIKE YOU FORGOT?

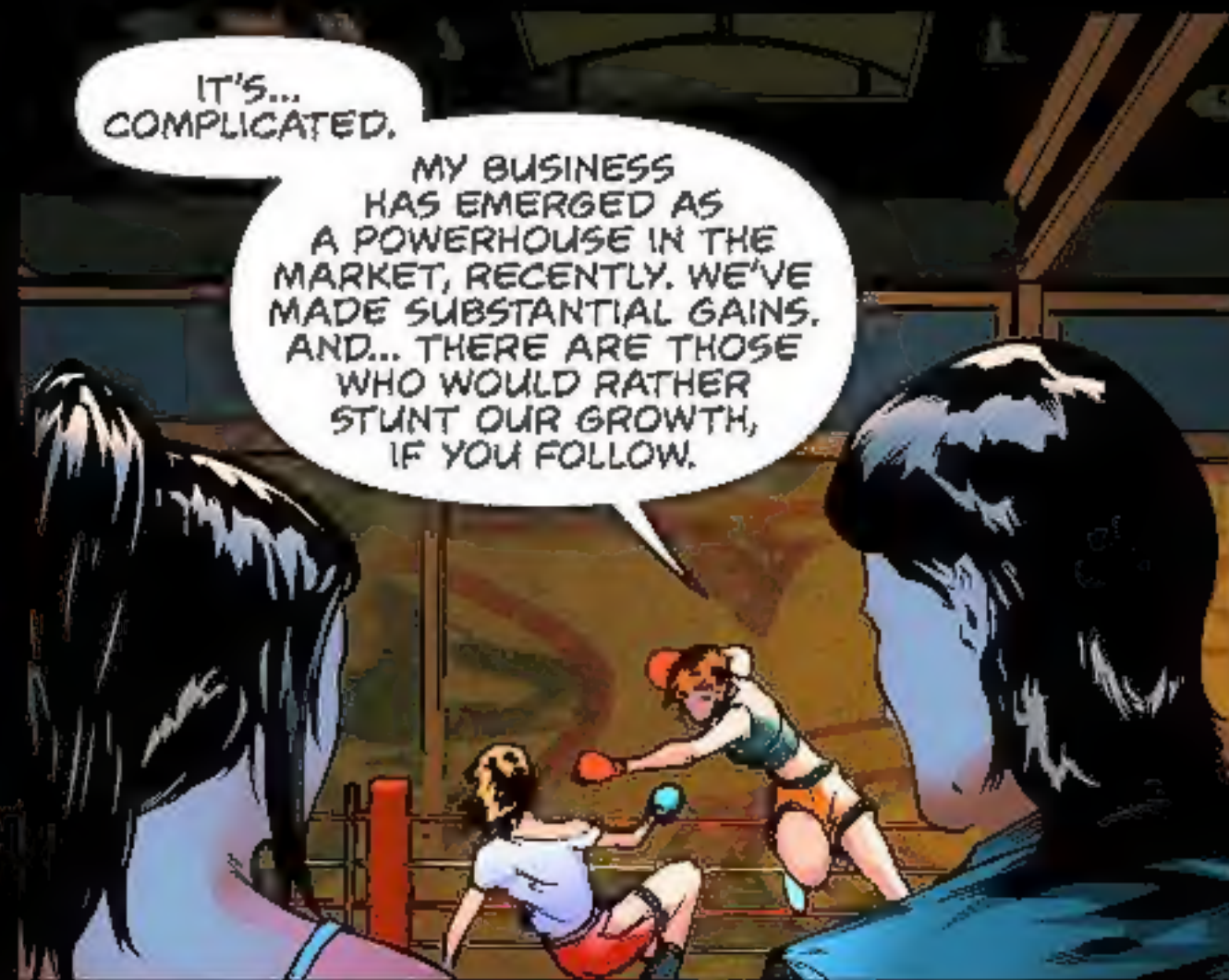
HA! IT WAS TRULY UNFORGETTABLE. LIKE YOURSELF.



SO, LI, WHAT HAS TAKEN YOU OUT OF THE AIR-CONDITIONED BOARDROOM AND INTO MY HOT AND SWEATY GYM ON THIS FINE AFTERNOON?

I NEED... HELP.

HOW SO?



IT'S... COMPLICATED.

MY BUSINESS HAS EMERGED AS A POWERHOUSE IN THE MARKET, RECENTLY. WE'VE MADE SUBSTANTIAL GAINS. AND... THERE ARE THOSE WHO WOULD RATHER STUNT OUR GROWTH, IF YOU FOLLOW.



NOT ENTIRELY.



IT'S MY COMPETITORS. THEY.. SEEK TO END MY SUCCESS, BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY... INCLUDING MY LIFE.



WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? I THOUGHT YOU WORKED IN PHARMACEUTICALS? WHY WOULD YOUR LIFE BE IN DANGER?

HANA--

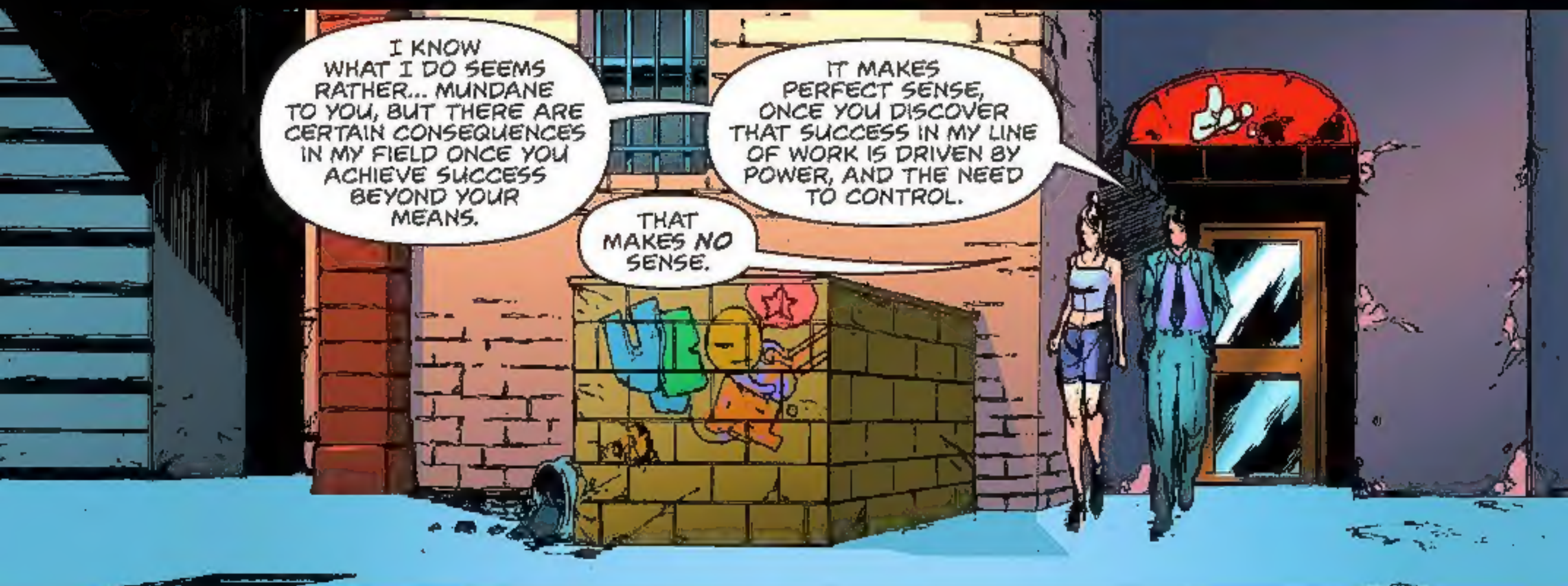
--DON'T DOWNPLAY IT! IF YOU'RE IN DANGER--





--I'M NOT  
DOWNPLAYING  
IT, I PROMISE.  
IT'S WHY I'M  
HERE.

WALK WITH  
ME.



I KNOW  
WHAT I DO SEEMS  
RATHER... MUNDANE  
TO YOU, BUT THERE ARE  
CERTAIN CONSEQUENCES  
IN MY FIELD ONCE YOU  
ACHIEVE SUCCESS  
BEYOND YOUR  
MEANS.

THAT  
MAKES NO  
SENSE.

IT MAKES  
PERFECT SENSE,  
ONCE YOU DISCOVER  
THAT SUCCESS IN MY LINE  
OF WORK IS DRIVEN BY  
POWER, AND THE NEED  
TO CONTROL.



WHY ARE  
YOU TELLING  
ME THIS?

BECAUSE...  
I NEED YOU.

WHAT  
DO YOU  
MEAN?



I NEED  
PROTECTION.

MORE--SO  
I NEED SOMEONE  
I CAN TRUST. YOU  
CAN OFFER  
BOTH.

BELIEVE ME, I  
WOULDN'T BE ASKING  
IF YOU WEREN'T THE  
LAST PERSON I CAN  
CALL UPON.



LI-- GET  
SERIOUS. I'M A  
FIGHTER NOT A  
BODYGUARD.

I DON'T  
SEE MUCH  
DIFFERENCE ONCE  
YOU GET DOWN TO  
THE BASICS OF  
BOTH.

YEAH, BUT  
STILL. WHAT DO  
YOU EXPECT ME TO  
DO? BEAT UP YOUR  
COLLEAGUES IF THEY  
GET TOO CROSS  
WITH YOU?



WOULD  
THAT BE SO  
BAD? YOU KNOW  
YOU WOULD  
ENJOY IT.

THAT'S  
NOT THE  
POINT.





LI... YOU KNOW I THINK OF YOU AS A BROTHER...

...BUT, WHAT YOU ASK... THAT'S NOT ME.

I HAD A FEELING YOU'D SAY THAT.

YET, YOU ASKED ANYWAY?



OF COURSE. YOU ARE SOMEONE I TRUST WITH MY LIFE-- AND THERE ARE VERY FEW OF THOSE.

DO NOT FRET OVER IT. IT WAS NOT RIGHT OF ME TO ASK, BUT I COULDN'T RESIST.



YOU SELDOM CAN.

IT'S WHAT GOT ME INTO TROUBLE IN THE FIRST PLACE. I'LL SEE YOU SOON. GET BACK IN THERE AND SHOW THEM WHO IS BOSS.



ALWAYS.





LATER.

LI IN TROUBLE? DID I HEAR THAT RIGHT?



IT WORRIES ME, MAYU. HE MAY HAVE A FANCY SUIT AND TIE AND HAVE DOZENS OF ASSISTANTS, BUT INSIDE, HE'S STILL THAT LITTLE BOY BY THE POND, COLLECTING TADPOLES.

YEAH, BUT REALLY-- WHAT DID HE EXPECT YOU TO DO? GO BEAT UP HIS ENEMIES FOR HIM?

NO, I THINK HE JUST WANTED SOMEONE HE CAN TRUST AROUND HIM. BELIEVE ME I KNOW WHAT'S THAT LIKE.



WE BOTH DO, DON'T FORGET.

I WOULDN'T WORRY IN HIS LINE OF WORK I HIGHLY DOUBT THAT HE IS IN ANY REAL DANGER. PROBABLY WILL JUST GET A TIRE SLASHED ON HIS ROLLS OR SOMETHING.



SPEAKING OF OCCUPATIONAL HAZARDS--

--OH, DON'T GET STARTED ON THAT AGAIN. WE'VE DISCUSSED THIS.

YOU DID MOST OF THE TALKING.



I LOVE YOU, LITTLE SISTER, BUT WE BOTH CHOSE OUR PATHS IN LIFE.

MINE DOESN'T REQUIRE CONSTANTLY LOOKING OVER MY SHOULDER.

~SIGH~

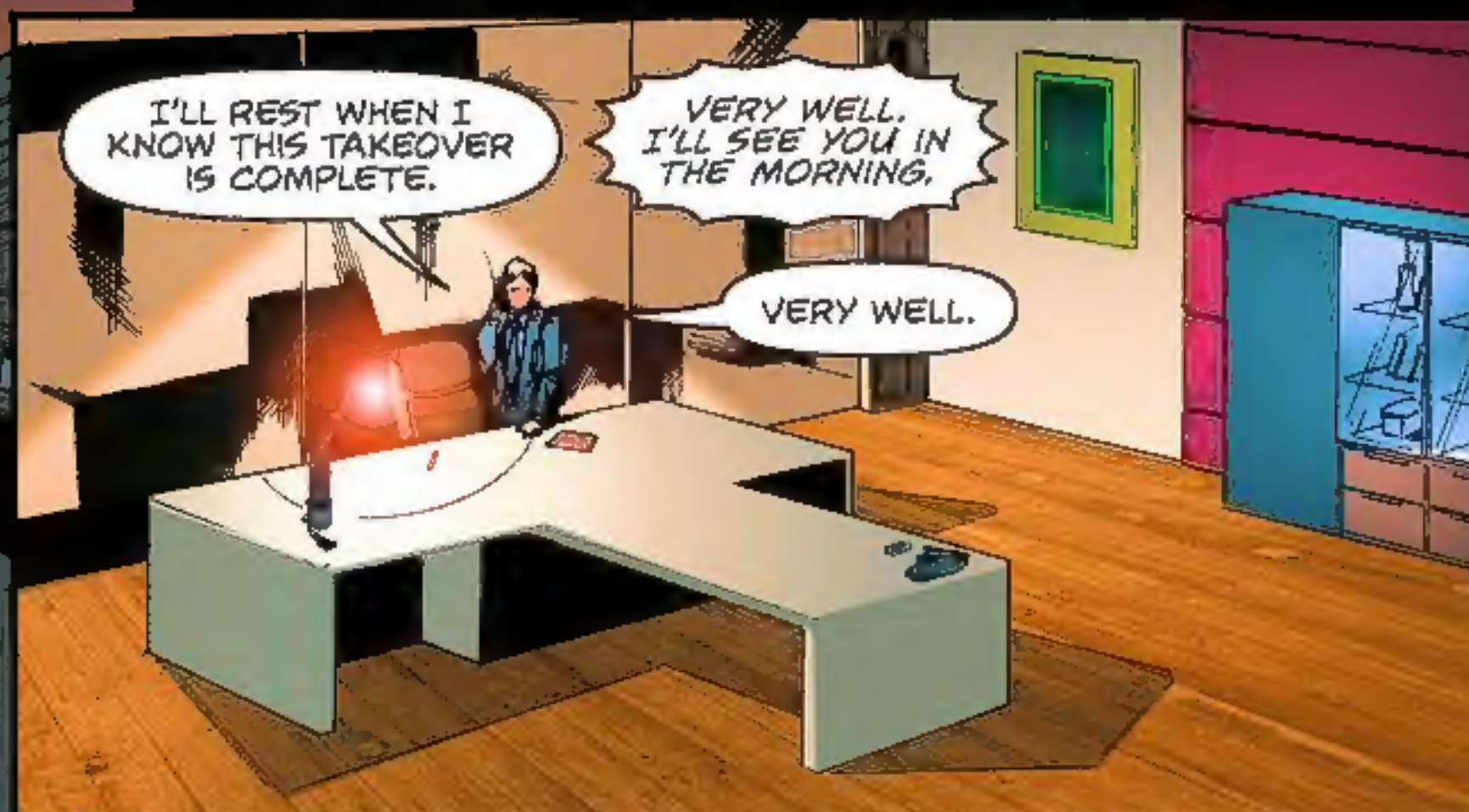
ONE DAY SOON, YOU WILL SEE THAT WE ALL SHOULD BE LOOKING OVER OUR SHOULDER.



I'LL CALL YOU. WE'LL DO THIS AGAIN.

YEAH.





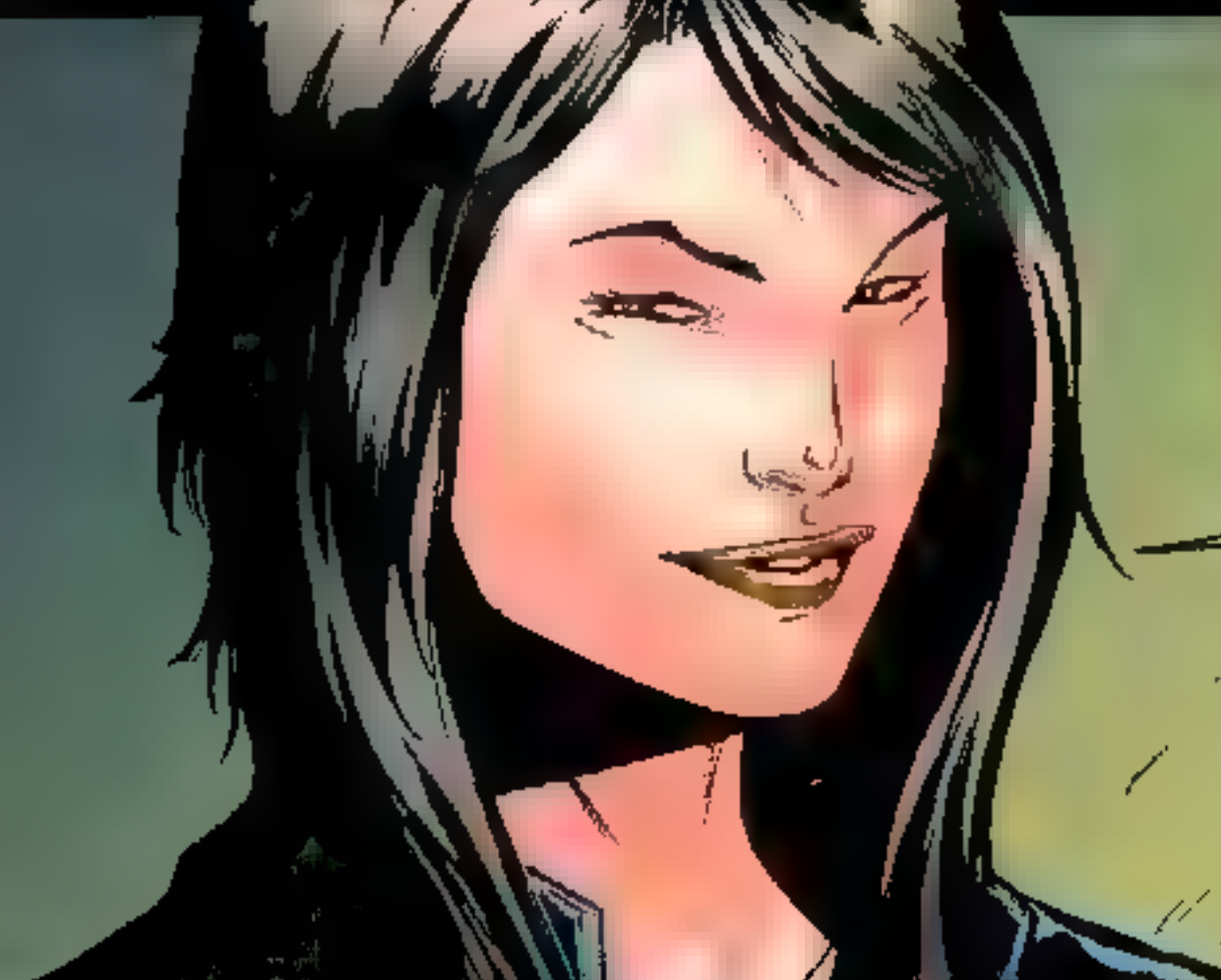




PLEASE!  
I KNOW WHO SENT  
YOU. WE CAN WORK  
THIS OUT. I CAN OFFER  
YOU MORE THAN  
RENSHU.



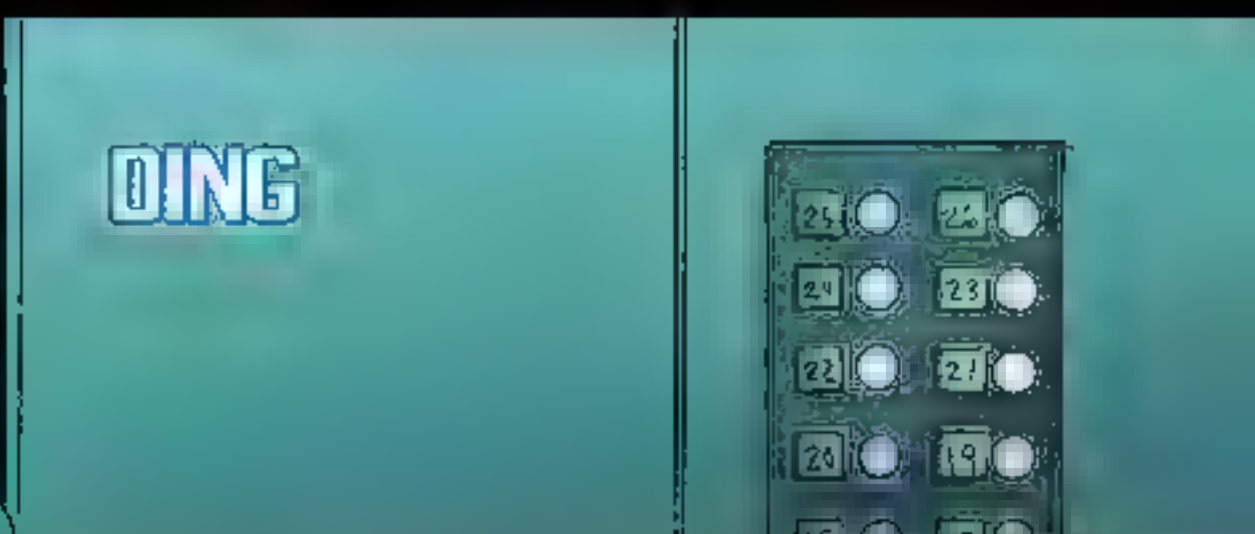
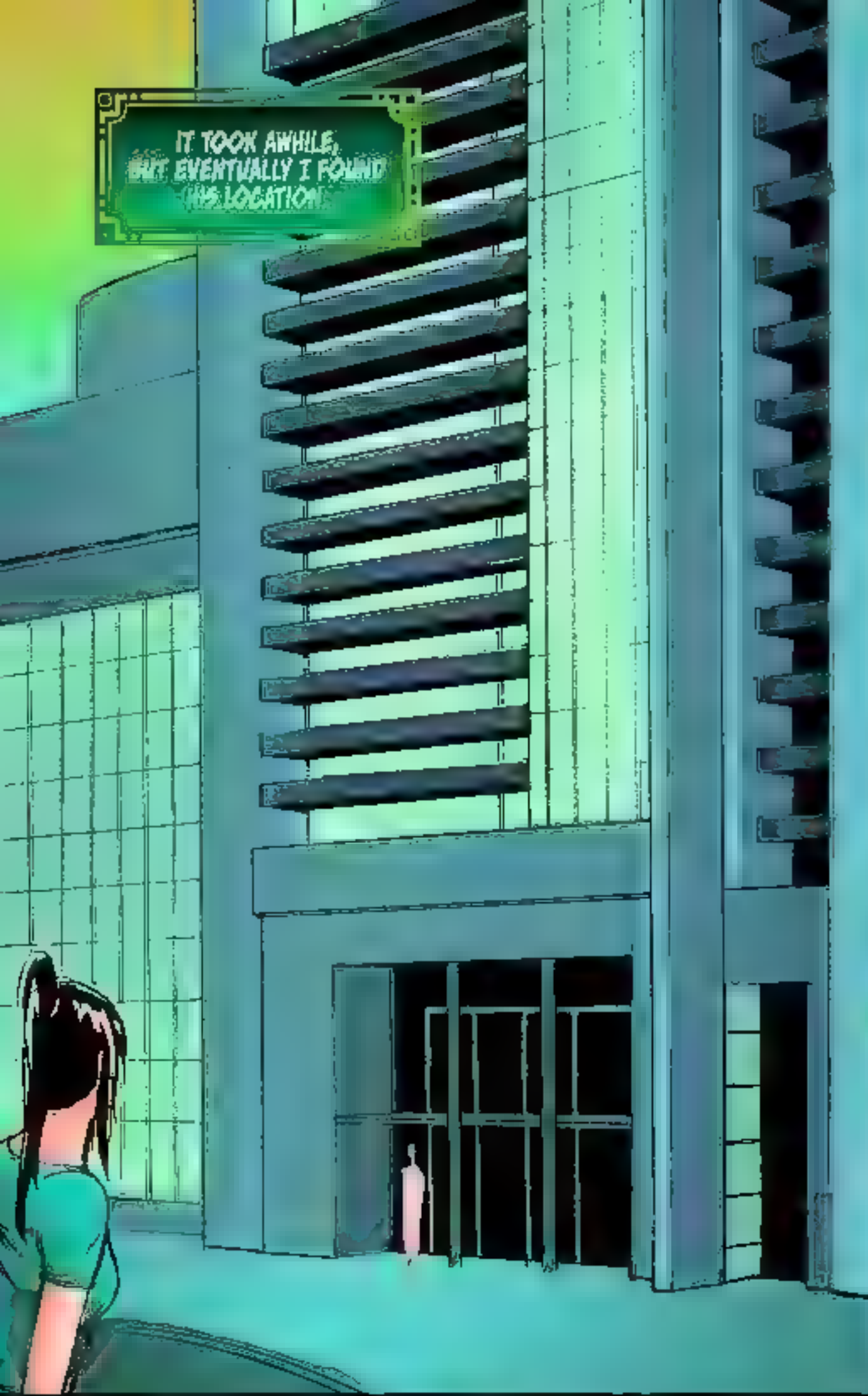
















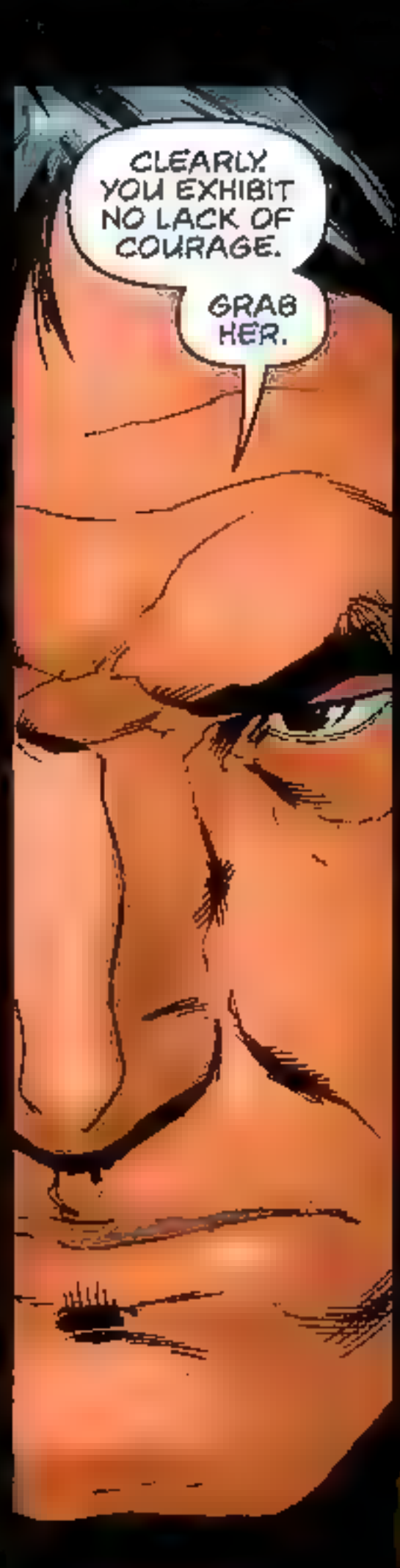
HAVE YOU  
COME LOOKING FOR  
VENGEANCE?



YOU KNOW  
WHY I'M HERE. LI  
DIDN'T DESERVE  
TO DIE!

BUT, YOU  
DO? YOU MUST  
HAVE A DEATH WISH,  
COMING HERE  
LIKE THIS.

I DON'T  
CARE.



CLEARLY  
YOU EXHIBIT  
NO LACK OF  
COURAGE.

GRAB  
HER.



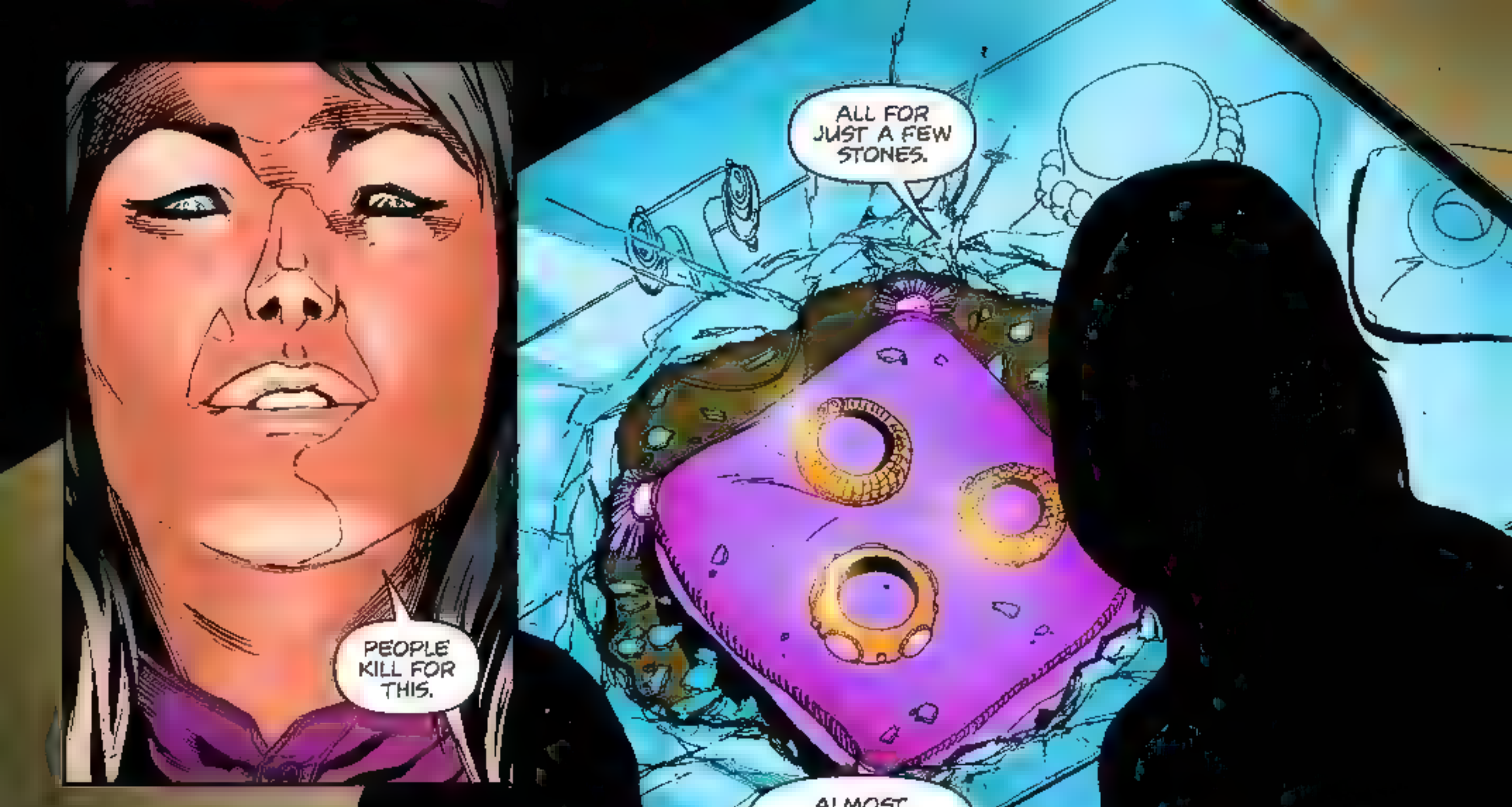
KRA!

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!

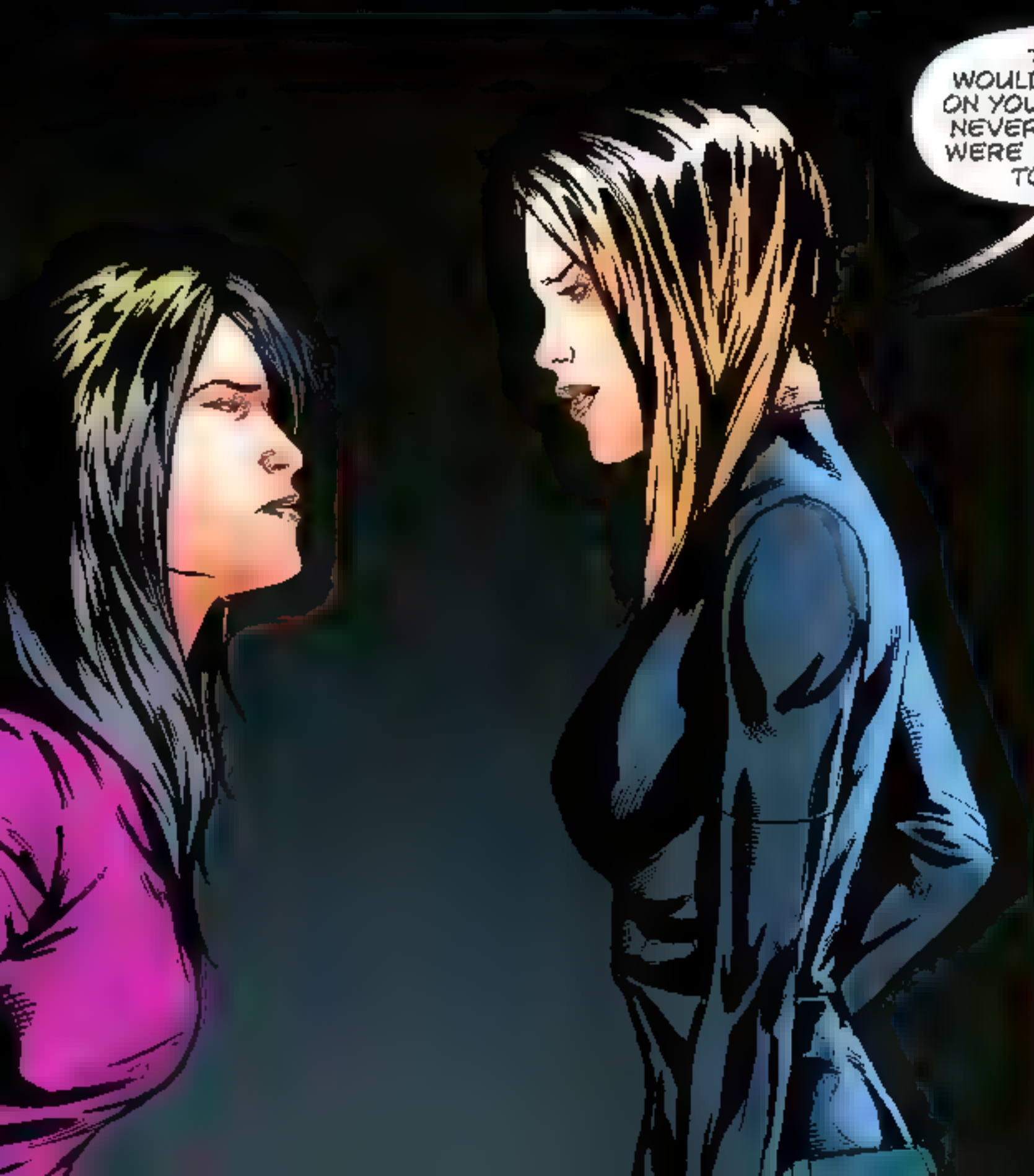




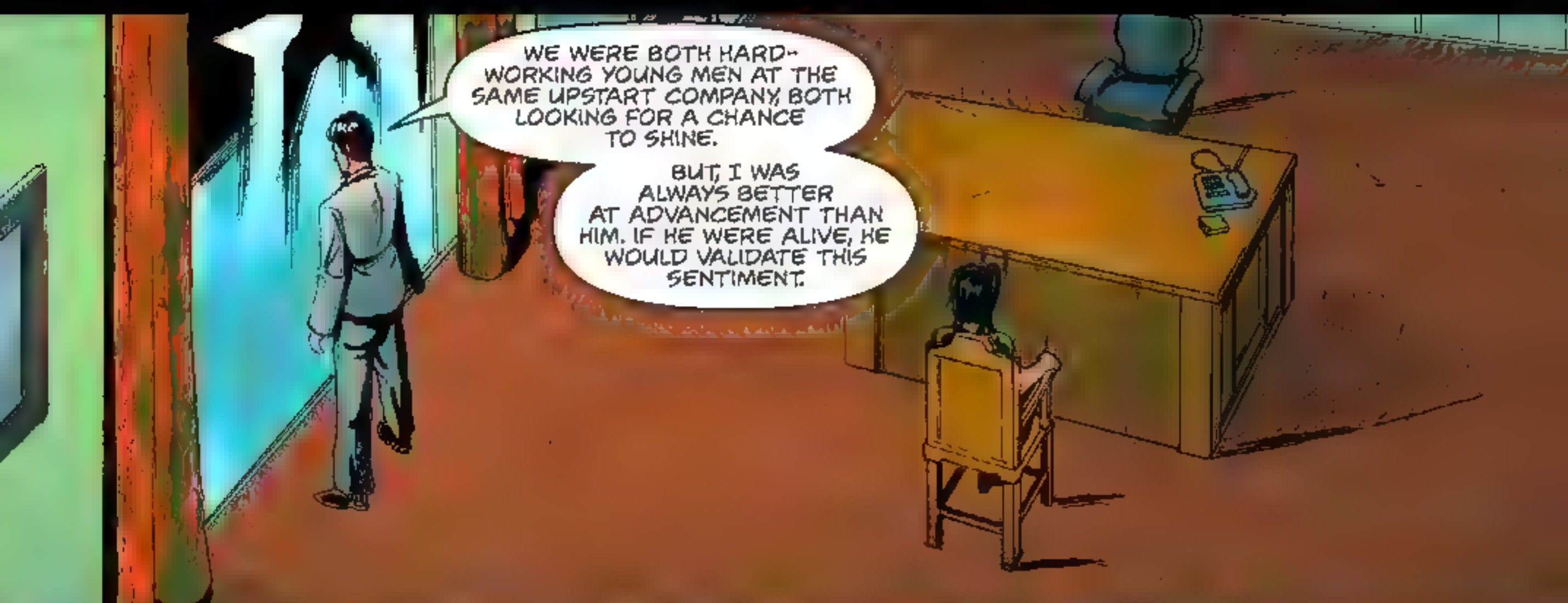














FOUR YEARS EARLIER.

"...FRIENDS.

WE'VE WORKED YEARS FOR THIS MOMENT, LI, HOW CAN YOU SAY NO? I LEAVE IN THE MORNING, YOU HAVE TO COME!

IT'S NOT WITHOUT GREAT DIFFICULTY THAT I HAVE TO DECLINE, BELIEVE ME.

THEN COME WITH ME, WE'LL RULE THIS INDUSTRY.

"WE HAD ALWAYS PLANNED TO START OUR OWN COMPANY ONE DAY-- AND I HAD PROVIDED THAT OPPORTUNITY FOR US IN BEIJING. BUT, LI... HAD OTHER PRIORITIES.

BUT, HANA AND MAYU...

...I CAN'T LEAVE THEM, RENSHU. I'M ALL THEY HAVE.

THE GIRLS?

I... I UNDERSTAND. WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT, WE WILL COME TO YOU. TRUST IN THAT.

"THAT IS WHEN WE WENT OUR SEPARATE WAYS. AS TIME WORE ON, OUR COMPETITIVE NATURES KICKED IN AS OUR COMPANIES GREW, BUT I WAS NEVER AS RUTHLESS AS HE SUSPECTED. I WOULD NEVER HARM THE MAN FOR MONEY. THERE IS NO HONOR IN SUCH PRACTICES. HOWEVER, THE SAME CANNOT BE SAID FOR ALL OF OUR COMPETITORS.

"YET, I NEVER STOPPED CARING FOR HIM AS A BROTHER..."





...MUCH  
LIKE HE CARED  
FOR YOU.

I NEVER...  
HE DIDN'T SPEAK  
MUCH OF HIS BUSINESS. I  
NEVER KNEW HE STAYED  
BECAUSE OF US.



THERE'S  
MUCH YOU DON'T  
KNOW APPARENTLY,  
INCLUDING INVESTIGATIVE  
TECHNIQUES. ALLOW  
ME TO SHOW  
YOU.



FORTUNATELY,  
I HAVE ALLOCATED THE  
CONSIDERABLE RESOURCES  
AT MY DISPOSAL TO SEARCH  
FOR LI'S MURDERER, YET MY  
INSTINCTS TOLD ME THAT I  
ALREADY KNEW WHERE THE  
TRAIL WOULD LEAD.



THE MAN IN  
THE PHOTOGRAPH IS  
**ZHOU KANG**. HE OWNS LSK  
HOLDINGS, THE COMPANY THAT  
RECENTLY MERGED WITH LI'S OWN  
CORPORATION. AND HE... HE IS  
THE ONE RESPONSIBLE FOR...  
**OUR FRIEND'S DEATH.**





WHAT? THAT  
MAKES NO SENSE.  
IF THEY MERGED THEN  
WHY KILL YOUR NEW  
PARTNER?

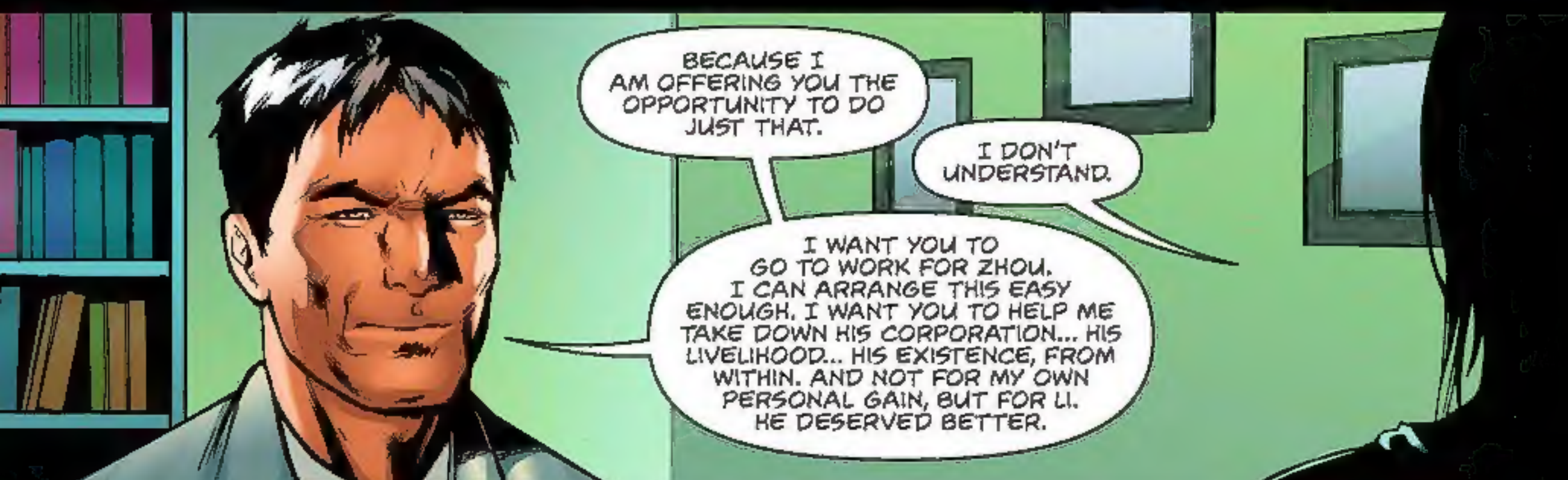
IT MAKES  
ALL THE SENSE IN  
THE WORLD-- IF YOU ARE  
DRIVEN BY GREED AND  
POWER, AND NOT BY  
TRUST, AND HONOR.

AND WHY  
SHOULD I BELIEVE  
THIS? HOW DO I KNOW  
YOU'RE NOT MAKING  
ALL OF IT UP?



YOU DON'T  
HAVE TO BELIEVE  
ME. IN TIME, YOU WILL  
DISCOVER ALL OF IT  
FOR YOURSELF.

WHAT  
MAKES YOU SO  
SURE?



BECAUSE I  
AM OFFERING YOU THE  
OPPORTUNITY TO DO  
JUST THAT.

I DON'T  
UNDERSTAND.

I WANT YOU TO  
GO TO WORK FOR ZHOU.  
I CAN ARRANGE THIS EASY  
ENOUGH. I WANT YOU TO HELP ME  
TAKE DOWN HIS CORPORATION... HIS  
LIVELIHOOD... HIS EXISTENCE, FROM  
WITHIN. AND NOT FOR MY OWN  
PERSONAL GAIN, BUT FOR LI.  
HE DESERVED BETTER.



I AM A  
FIGHTER NOT A  
SECRETARY. FIND  
SOMEONE ELSE TO  
DO YOUR DIRTY  
WORK.



I ALREADY HAVE.  
YOU BOTH WILL DO THIS  
TOGETHER. YOU KNOW  
HER WELL.



LIEUTENANT  
NING...





////////////////////

DO  
WE HAVE  
HER?

YES,  
SHE'S HERE  
NOW.



MAYU...  
WHAT HAVE YOU  
DONE?



EITHER  
THE TWO OF YOU  
HELP US TAKE DOWN  
ZHAO... OR REST  
ASSURED...



...YOUR SISTER  
WILL NEVER SEE  
THE OUTSIDE OF  
A CELL AGAIN.

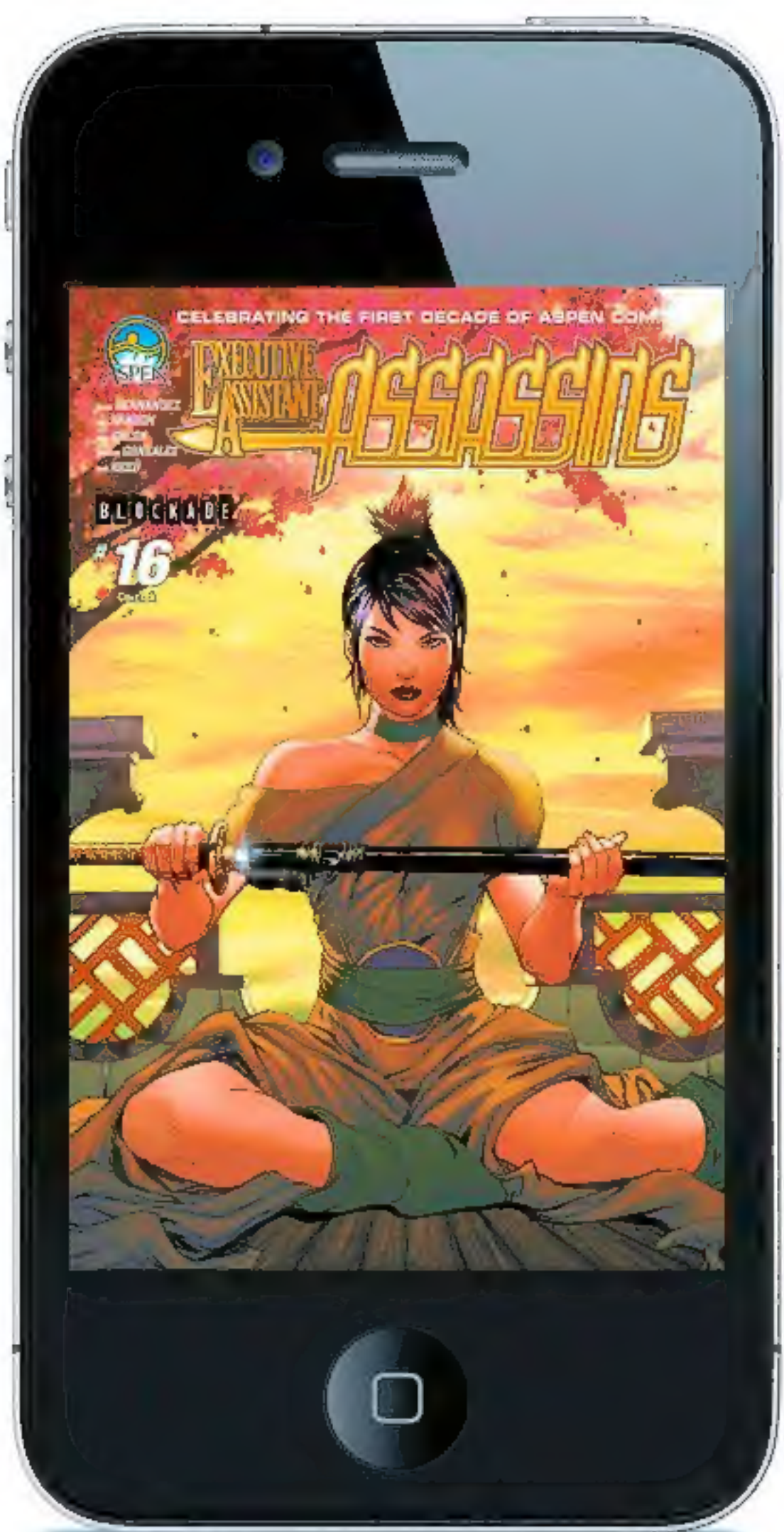
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